



Airport At Scott Worth Considering

Political leaders in Missouri are doing no one a service with their nearly hysterical reaction to the distant prospect of Scott Air Force Base near Belleville being used to augment Lambert Field. They see the study that examined the possibility of using Scott for passenger and cargo service, done for the Illinois Department of Transportation, as part of a plot to replace Lambert. It is no such thing. Missourians owe it to the St. Louis region to consider the study carefully and soberly instead of hollering before they are hurt.

Scott Air Base might actually be needed as a complement to Lambert if passenger traffic keeps rising as fast as it has in the last decade. The Illinois study's projections — and they are only that — indicate that some 2.5 million people might utilize Scott by 2005. If correct, that is 2.5 million people Lambert might or might not be able to handle. If high-speed transit between Scott

and Lambert became feasible, the two airports could make a winning combination.

The St. Louis Airport Authority, now conducting an 18-month study on a master plan for Lambert's future, will certainly find many ways to expand capacity there. But the authority knows the airport has inherent limits on its ability to expand, due to the layout of its runways and its proximity to Interstate 70. Lambert may need help 10 years down the road.

Instead of building a brand new airport somewhere else, it may be sensible to develop a secondary airport. Seven of the nation's 10 busiest airport regions have more than one major field. Why not St. Louis, number 10 on the list? But this is to anticipate events. The question now is simply whether to study the idea of using Scott as a supplemental airport. It is certainly worth investigation, not only by Illinois, but by the St. Louis Airport Authority itself.